

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
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AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
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AMEMBASSY MANILA
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AMEMBASSY RANGOON
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
USLO PEKING
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

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LIMDIS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EO 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PEPR, OVIP, FR, TH, VM
SUBJ: FRENCH FONMIN VISITS TO THAILAND AND VIETNAM

SUMMARY: ACCORDING TO FRENCH EMBASSY, CURRENT CYCLE OF
VISITS BY FRENCH FONMIN LOUIS DE GUIRINGAUD TO THAILAND,
VIETNAM AND INDONESIA WERE PLANNED TO INDICATE FRESH
FRENCH POLITICAL AS WELL AS ECONOMIC INTEREST IN THE
REGION. IN THAILAND, DE GUIRINGAUD LAUDED THAI AND ASEAN
GOALS OF CULTIVATING PEACEFUL RELATIONS WITH THEIR
NEIGHBORS. HE ALSO DISCUSSED REFUGEES, TRADE AND
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INVESTMENT. IN VIETNAM, THE FOCUS WAS ON BILATERAL
ISSUES, LARGELY INVOLVING ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE. REGARDING
INTERNATIONAL ISSUES, VIETNAMESE EMPLOYED AN AMBIGUOUS
FORMULATION IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE FRENCH ON POSSIBLE
SOVIET BASES IN VIETNAM. THEY WERE ALSO AMBIGUOUS ABOUT
THE PROSPECTS FOR NORMALIZATION OF TIES WITH THE U.S.
THEY BLAMED PEKING FOR THEIR TROUBLES WITH KAMPUCHEA.

FONMIN TRINH "DEPLORED" THE BREAK IN FRANCO-LAO RELATIONS. VISIT BY DE GUIRINGAUD FOLLOWS OTHER INDICATIONS OF INCREASED WEST EUROPEAN INTEREST IN THE STABILITY OF THE REGION AND IN THE WELFARE OF THAILAND AND THE OTHER ASEAN STATES. VISITS TO THAILAND AND VIETNAM SEEMED TO HAVE ADVANCED BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH FRANCE. THIS PARALLELS U.S. GENERAL INTERESTS IN THE REGION. END SUMMARY.

1. SENIOR FRENCH EMBASSY OFFICER PROVIDED US SEPTEMBER 11 THE FOLLOWING ACCOUNT OF VISIT BY FRENCH FONMIN DE GUIRINGAUD TO THAILAND SEPTEMBER 3-6, TO VIETNAM SEPTEMBER 6-9, AND HIS STOPOVER SEPTEMBER 9 IN BANGKOK ENROUTE TO JAKARTA.

2. ACCORDING TO FRENCH EMBOFF, THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF THE VISIT BY DE GUIRINGAUD TO SE ASIA WAS POLITICAL, ALTHOUGH THERE WERE OBVIOUSLY IMPORTANT ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL OBJECTIVES WHICH THE FONMIN AND HIS ENTOURAGE, WHICH INCLUDED FRENCH BUSINESSMEN, HOPED TO ADVANCE. DE GUIRINGAUD WAS THE FIRST FRENCH FONMIN EVER TO VISIT THAILAND, AND HIS WAS THE FIRST MINISTERIAL-LEVEL VISIT TO VIETNAM SINCE 1945. VISIT BY DE GUIRINGAUD, ACCORDING TO THE FRENCH EMBOFF, REPRESENTED A FRESH ATTEMPT TO INDICATE FRANCE'S INTERESTS IN THE AREA UNDER THE GREATLY CHANGED CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH NOW PERTAIN. THE VISIT WAS "HISTORIC AND SYMBOLIC" IN IMPORTANCE TO FRANCE, CONFIDENTIAL

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RATHER THAN A SEARCH FOR PRACTICAL AGREEMENTS, ACCORDING TO FRENCH EMBOFF.

3. THAILAND. IN THAILAND, DE GUIRINGAUD CONFERRED WITH PM KRIANGSAK, FONMIN UPPADIT, AND DEPUTY PM FOR ECONOMIC AFFAIRS SUNTHORN. HE WAS ALSO GRANTED AN AUDIENCE WITH THE KING IN SOUTHERN THAILAND IN NARATHIWAT. HE HELD A PRESS CONFERENCE SEPTEMBER 5, IN WHICH HE REITERATED MOST OF THE MAIN POINTS OF HIS CONVERSATIONS WITH THE THAI LEADERS. WITH THE PRIME MINISTER AND UPPADIT, DE GUIRINGAUD STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE FRANCE ATTACHES TO THAI EFFORTS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH THE REGION. DE GUIRINGAUD EXPRESSED FULL SUPPORT FOR ASEAN AND AN ASEAN/EEC DIALOGUE EXPECTED IN NOVEMBER. HE INDICATED HIS HOPE THAT AMICABLE AND STABLE RELATIONS COULD BE DEVELOPED AMONG THE "FIVE" ASEAN STATES AND THE "FOUR"--VIETNAM, LAOS, KAMPUCHEA, AND BURMA. HE COMMENTED THAT THE DIRECTION OF DEVELOPMENT OF RELATIONS BETWEEN THE FIVE AND THE "FOUR" WAS, OF COURSE, A MATTER FOR THE STATES INVOLVED.

4. DE GUIRINGAUD ALSO TOLD THAI LEADERS AND THE PRESS

THAT THE REGION HAD BEEN SUBJECTED TO INTERFERENCE BY
EXTERNAL POWERS FOR TOO LONG. DE GUIRINGAUD SAID THAT
IT WAS "TIME FOR THE REGION TO CONSTRUCT ITS OWN DESTINY
WITHOUT UNJUSTIFIED INTERFERENCE BY OUTSIDE POWERS."
FRENCH EMBOFF CALLED THIS A FRENCH CODE PHRASE FOR SINO-
SOVIET RIVALRIES IN THE AREA. WITH THAILAND AND PERHAPS
KAMPUCHEA ALSO IN MIND, DE GUIRINGAUD PUBLICLY ADVOCATED
"SCRUPULOUS RESPECT FOR THE INDEPENDENCE, SOVEREIGNTY,
AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF THE NINE STATES IN THE
REGION."

5. DE GUIRINGAUD OUTLINED FOR THAI LEADERS FRANCE'S
RELATIONS WITH THE INDOCHINESE STATES, EXPRESSING
REGRET OVER THE DIPLOMATIC BREAK WITH LAOS AND FRANCE'S
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5. DE GUIRINGAUD OUTLINED FOR THAI LEADERS FRANCE'S RELATIONS WITH THE INDOCHINESE STATES, EXPRESSING REGRET OVER THE DIPLOMATIC BREAK WITH LAOS AND FRANCE'S WILLINGNESS TO HAVE RELATIONS WITH PHNOM PENH. FRENCH EMBOFF TOLD US IN CONFIDENCE THAT HE WAS SURPRISED OVER THE FLEXIBILITY OF THE GOF POSITION TOWARD KAMPUCHEA. HE THOUGHT PARIS WOULD TAKE A MUCH HARDER LINE. DE GUIRINGAUD EXPRESSED TO THAI LEADERS FIRM SUPPORT FOR THE CONTINUED INDEPENDENCE OF KAMPUCHEA, A VIEW WHICH CORRESPONDED WITH THAT OF THE THAIS. THE QUESTION OF HANOI'S INTENTIONS VIS-A-VIS PHNOM PENH WAS NOT CONFIDENTIAL

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EXPLICITLY ADDRESSED IN TALKS, FRENCH EMBOFF SAID. DE GUIRINGAUD DESCRIBED TO THE THAIS FRANCE'S RELATIONS WITH VIETNAM AS GOOD AND USEFUL TO BOTH PARIS AND HANOI.

6. FRENCH EMBOFF SAID THAT DE GUIRINGAUD LAUDED THE THAIS FOR THE GENEROUS TREATMENT OF REFUGEES FROM INDOCHINA AND PROMISED TO CONTINUE TO HELP BY ACCEPTING REFUGEES. THE THAIS CONVEYED A SINCERE APPRECIATION FOR THE ROLE FRANCE HAS PLAYED AND ASKED THE FRENCH TO ACCEPT MORE OF THE LESS DESIRABLE AND LESS WELL-TRAINED REFUGEES. THAIS URGED FRANCE TO ACCEPT MORE REFUGEES FOR RESETTLEMENT IN FRENCH GUIANA. DE GUIRINGAUD EXPLAINED THAT FRENCH GUIANA WAS NOT RPT NOT A COLONY BUT AN OVERSEAS DEPARTMENT OF THE METROPOLE. DEPUTIES FROM GUIANA OPPOSED THE INFLUX OF LARGE NUMBER OF INDOCHINESE REFUGEES. WERE THE DEPARTMENT A COLONY, DE GUIRINGAUD ASSERTED, REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT THERE WOULD BE MORE FEASIBLE. NEVERTHELESS, DE GUIRINGAUD PROMISED THAT FRANCE WOULD CONTINUE TO ACCEPT ABOUT 1,000 INDOCHINESE REFUGEES A MONTH, BUT COULD NOT RPT NOT ACCEPT MORE.

7. IN HIS TALKS WITH DEPUTY PM SUNTHORN AND ALSO WITH PM KRIANGSAK, DE GUIRINGAUD AND HIS BUSINESS COLLEAGUES DISCUSSED TRADE AND INVESTMENT. THAIS URGED FRANCE NOT RPT NOT TO REDUCE ITS IMPORT OF TAPIOCA AND TO HELP THAILAND DEVELOP EXPORT MARKETS IN AFRICA. DE GUIRINGAUD NOTED THAT THE TAPIOCA PROBLEM INVOLVED COMPLICATED NEGOTIATIONS WITH ALL THE EEC COUNTRIES AND URGED THE THAIS TO DIVERSIFY THEIR MARKETS FROM THE EEC. (FRANCE IS SECOND, AFTER THE NETHERLANDS, IN IMPORT OF THAI TAPIOCA PRODUCTS, HAVING IMPORTED ABOUT 270,000 TONS OF TAPIOCA PRODUCTS FROM THAILAND THIS YEAR.)

8. VIETNAM. VISIT TO VIETNAM WAS AT INVITATION OF

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PREMIER PHAM VAN DONG, WHO WAS IN THAILAND FOR THE DURATION OF THE DE GUIRINGAUD VISIT. CONFLICTING SCHEDULES MADE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR DONG TO MEET DE GUIRINGAUD IN HANOI. FONMIN NGUYEN DUY TRINH SERVED AS DE GUIRINGAUD'S HOST AND INTERLOCUTOR IN HANOI. WE HAVE HEARD FROM SEVERAL SOURCES THAT THE FRENCH WERE MIFFED OVER DONG'S ABSENCE, BUT WENT AHEAD WITH THE VISIT ANYWAY. BASED ON HIS REVIEW OF TWO REPORTING CABLES FROM THE FRENCH EMBASSY IN HANOI, FRENCH EMBOFF SAID THAT THE ATMOSPHERE DURING THE VISIT WAS GOOD, INDEED BETTER THAN HAD BEEN ANTICIPATED. THE VIETNAMESE WERE GRACIOUS HOSTS. BILATERALLY, TALKS HAD FOCUSED ON IMPLEMENTATION OF AID AND CREDIT AGREEMENTS, WHICH IS DEVELOPING EXTREMELY SLOWLY. VIETNAMESE MADE ADDITIONAL INVESTMENT AND CREDIT PROPOSALS. PARIS WILL STUDY THE REQUESTS AND CONTINUE TO APPROVE OR DISAPPROVE THEM ON THEIR MERITS. THERE WAS NO INDICATION THAT FRANCE PLANS TO CUT BACK ON ITS AID TO VIETNAM BECAUSE OF DIFFICULTIES IN IMPLEMENTING ITS EARLIER ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS OR BECAUSE OF GROWING TENSIONS BETWEEN VIETNAM AND ITS COMMUNIST NEIGHBORS.

9. ON VIETNAMESE TROUBLES WITH THEIR NEIGHBORS, FONMIN TRINH BLAMED THE CHINESE. HE INSISTED THAT PEKING WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR VIETNAMESE DIFFICULTIES WITH KAMPUCHEA. HE WAS NEITHER OPTIMISTIC NOR TOTALLY PESSIMISTIC ABOUT HANOI'S BEING ABLE TO RESOLVE ITS PROBLEMS WITH THE PRC THROUGH NEGOTIATIONS.

10. ON THE QUESTION OF SOVIET BASES IN VIETNAM, ABOUT WHICH DE GUIRINGAUD INQUIRED, TRINH SAID THAT WITH THEIR SATELLITES THE AMERICANS WERE CAPABLE OF KNOWING THAT THERE WAS NO SOVIET BASE AT CAM RANH BAY. FRENCH EMBOFF NOTED THAT TRINH DID NOT USE THE WORD "JAMAIS" (NEVER) WHICH THE VIETNAMESE USUALLY EMPLOY WHEN DENYING THAT

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THERE ARE OR EVER WILL BE FOREIGN BASES ON THEIR SOIL.
INSTEAD, TRINH ADDED, "NOUS DISPOSERONS DU BASE A CAM
RANH DANS UNE MANIERE QUI SERVIRA LA CAUSE DE NOTRE
INDEPENDENCE ET SOUVERAINETE" (WE WILL USE THE CAM RANH
BASE IN A MANNER WHICH WILL SERVE THE CAUSE OF OUR
INDEPENDENCE AND SOVEREIGNTY). FRENCH INTERPRETED THIS
TO MEAN THAT IF THE PRC THREATENED THE INDEPENDENCE AND
SOVEREIGNTY OF THE SRV, HANOI MIGHT PERMIT THE SOVIETS
TO USE CAM RANH TO PROTECT THE INDEPENDENCE OF VIETNAM.
THIS WAS THE ONLY DIRECT MENTION OF THE SOVIET UNION IN
DE GUIRINGAUD'S DISCUSSIONS WITH THE VIETNAMESE.
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11. DE GUIRINGAUD ASKED ABOUT NORMALIZATION OF U.S. AND
SRV TIES. TRINH RESPONDED MERELY THAT THERE WERE THREE
MATTERS TO BE SETTLED: NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS, MIA'S,
AND "REMUNERATIONS." TRINH APPARENTLY ADDED THAT DEPUTY
FONMIN NGUYEN CO THACH WOULD MEET WITH ASSISTANT SECRETARY
HOLBROOKE SEPTEMBER 23 IN NEW YORK. ACCORDING TO THE
FRENCH INTERPRETATION, TRINH WAS AMBIGUOUS ABOUT THE SRV
POSITION TOWARDS NORMALIZATION OF U.S.-SRV TIES. IT
WAS NOT RPT NOT CLEAR WHETHER TRINH MEANT THAT HANOI WAS
WILLING TO NORMALIZE WITHOUT PRECONDITIONS OR TO
NEGOTIATE NORMALIZATION WITHOUT PRECONDITIONS.
(AMERICAN AND OTHER FOREIGN JOURNALISTS WHO WERE IN
CONTACT WITH VIETNAMESE OFFICIALS DURING PHAM VAN DONG'S

VISIT TO BANGKOK NOTED THE SAME AMBIGUITY REGARDING THE VIETNAMESE POSITION. DESPITE PRESSURE BY NEWSMEN, THE VIETNAMESE REFUSED TO FURTHER CLARIFY THE SRV POSITION.)

12. DE GUIRINGAUD EXPRESSED REGRET TO TRINH THAT LAOS HAD CHOSEN TO CAUSE THE BREAK IN RELATIONS BETWEEN FRANCE AND LAOS. TRINH RESPONDED THAT HE DEPLORED THE BREAK AND THAT HE WOULD LOOK INTO THE SUBJECT, IMPLYING THAT HANOI WAS WILLING TO TRY TO ASSIST WITH THE RESTORATION OF RELATIONS.

13. FRENCH REQUESTED AND OBTAINED RELUCTANT THAI MFA ASSISTANCE IN ARRANGING A LAST MINUTE AIRPORT MEETING IN BANGKOK BETWEEN DE GUIRINGAUD AND SRV PREMIER PHAM VAN DONG. MEETING OCCURRED SEPTEMBER 9 AT THE AIRPORT FOR ABOUT 45 MINUTES WHILE DE GUIRINGAUD WAS IN TRANSIT. FRENCH EMBOFF TOLD US THAT THE TWO LEADERS DISCUSSED BILATERAL MATTERS ONLY, WITH NOTHING EMERGING OF SPECIAL INTEREST. FRENCH SAID THAT DONG LOOK VERY CONFIDENTIAL

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OLD (NOT SURPRISING, AS HE IS 72). PRESS INDICATED THAT DE GUIRINGAUD AND DONG DISCUSSED SUCH ISSUES AS ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE AND DUAL NATIONALITY.

14. IN A CURIOUS EPISODE, PM KRIANGSAK WAS APPARENTLY FIRST INFORMED BY PREMIER DONG ON THE PLANE BACK FROM SOUTHERN THAILAND, WHERE DONG HAD CALLED ON THE KING, OF THE IMPENDING MEETING BETWEEN DONG AND DE GUIRINGAUD. AS REPORTED BY THE PRESS, KRIANGSAK SUBSEQUENTLY TOLD JOURNALISTS THAT IT WAS "DIPLOMATICALLY INCORRECT" FOR THE FRENCH EMBASSY TO ARRANGE THE MEETING "UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES PREVAILING AT THE AIRPORT." FRENCH AMBASSADOR SHOULD HAVE INFORMED HIM (KRIANGSAK) FIRST, KRIANGSAK REPORTEDLY SAID. SINCE "PREMIER DONG WAS THE GUEST OF HONOR, THE FRENCH FOREIGN MINISTER SHOULD HAVE CALLED ON PREMIER DONG," KRIANGSAK REPORTEDLY SAID.

15. FRENCH EMBASSY IS, OF COURSE, UPSET BY KRIANGSAK'S REACTION. FRENCH EMBOFF SAID THAT FONMIN UPPADIT KNEW OF THE PROPOSED MEETING AND THAT MFA PROTOCOL WAS TO HAVE MADE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE MEETING. (THIS IS TRUE BUT MFA SENIOR OFFICER INDICATED THAT MEETING WAS FORCED ON THE RTG BY THE FRENCH, SECURING DONG'S AGREEMENT BEFORE THE THAIS HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO GIVE THEIR VIEWS.)

16. COMMENT: DESPITE THE BIZARRE EPISODE REGARDING DE GUIRINGAUD'S MEETING WITH DONG, WE BELIEVE ON BALANCE THAT THE VISIT ADVANCED FRANCO-THAI RELATIONS. FOR

THAIS, THIS WAS PARTICULARLY TRUE IN THE ECONOMIC AREA,
ESPECIALLY TAPIOCA EXPORTS ON WHICH THAIS PLACED
MAJOR EMPHASIS.

17. THE DISGRUNTLEMENT OVER DONG'S ABSENCE FROM VIETNAM
DURING VISIT BY GUIRINGAUD NOTWITHSTANDING, WE BELIEVE
THAT THE VISIT TO THE SRV AND THE SUBSEQUENT MEETING WITH
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DONG IN BANGKOK SMOOTHED RUFFLED FEATHERS AND RESULTED

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IN IMPROVED SRV-FRENCH RELATIONS.

18. MORE GENERALLY, VISIT BY DE GUIRINGAUD FOLLOWS
OTHER EVIDENCE IN RECENT MONTHS THAT THE EEC AND WEST
EUROPEANS ARE SHOWING INCREASED INTEREST IN GROWTH AND
STABILITY IN THE ASEAN STATES, SPECIFICALLY THAILAND.
AS A CONSEQUENCE, THE EUROPEANS SEEM INTERESTED NOT
ONLY IN EXPANDING ECONOMIC RELATIONS BUT ALSO IN
CULTIVATING POLITICAL TIES. ABRAMOWITZ

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